



(Photo by Pfc. William Hutton 7th MPAD)

The Candy man!

Chaplain (Capt.) George Wallace, the chaplain for 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment,, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, offers candy to school children while Soldiers from his battalion search a school for possible insurgents in a northern Baghdad neighborhood Feb. 15.

'Red Dragons' keep guns hot, ready for action

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq - Artillery has always been considered the 'King of Battle,' but when troops from the 3rd "Red Dragon" Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division arrived in Iraq a few months ago, they found out their job was less about

artillery then they might have thought.

The Soldiers have been stationed at FOB Union III performing escort duties for the U.S. embassy and missions handed down from the brigade. While most of the Soldiers stay busy with the "Red Dragon Express," as it's called, some Soldiers get a chance to practice and perform the duties that truly make them the 'King of Battle.'

Several miles south of their home base in the International Zone is where a pla-

toon of artillery men rotate in for a month-long stay to keep their mobile howitzers hot and ready for any mission they might get called for. They call it "keeping the guns hot."

Around the clock, Soldiers man a few Paladins and stay ready to send rounds downrange, when needed.

Sgt. Steven Lucero and his team have

See Guns Page 4

Take a break, and a back seat on R&R leave

Most of us are heading into our fourth month here in Baghdad and that means we are heading into the heart of the environmental leave period of this deployment.

I remember when the program began. I was vehemently against it. At the time, I thought that taking our warriors out of the battle space, letting them relax and recuperate away from the day-to-day grind here in Iraq would cause them to lose their edge, at the least, and prompt some of them to skip town once they saw freedom's door, at worst.

This is my third deployment to Iraq. I have to admit that back in 2003 I was dead wrong. The program allows our Soldier/warriors a chance to get away from here and feel normal again, if even for a few weeks. Soldiers, overwhelmingly, come back re-energized and recommitted to mission accomplishment upon their return.

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

The military breeds a take charge mentality. As you ascend in the ranks, responsibilities are added. Our leadership positions are filled with "Type A," take-charge characters that don't shy away from hard work or sacrifice.

In my house, I used to be known as "RT." After referring to myself like that for

**Pegasus 9
sends
Command Sgt.
Maj. Philip
Johndrow**



awhile, one of my kids finally asked me, "Daddy, what's this 'RT' mean?"

"That's easy," I said. "I Run Things."

Going home on environmental leave isn't the time to take over. Believe it or not, while you were away the bills were paid, the kids got fed and off to school and the home life went on, usually without a hitch.

However, things may be different. You may have been running things in your home another way before you left, but things have changed over time.

Expect that, and don't fight it.

Army families find a way to cope with separation. Maybe your spouse takes the kids to a fast-food burger place on a particular night (taking a break from cooking and clean-up afterward) and you're dead set on a healthy diet. Go with the flow and order yourself a salad and pass on the grease.

Your family is managing to get through

this deployment day-by-day. Your reintroduction into family life should be a celebration, not a war. Take things in stride, enjoy the company of friends and loved ones and don't sweat the small stuff.

As for my concern four years ago about Soldiers skipping out on the mission? I don't have the statistics in front of me, but that concern was unfounded, as well.

Our Soldiers return, often with a more personal (and sometimes painful) good-bye than the unit send-off that sent us packing in the first place. There are no band members or hundreds in attendance to see us back here from leave. It's just you and your family.

Coming over here in a formation of hundreds or even thousands, in my mind, is a much easier thing to do than to stand at the airport clinging to your significant other, breaking that embrace and walking away to catch your return flight.

That's self-less service. That is sacrifice. And knowing that great Americans, like you, who can do that and face this mission head-on is why I am proud to be serving with you, and for you, as your command sergeant major.

Go home. Have fun. Come back, and win.

FIRST TEAM!

**Arabic Phrase
of the Day
shloonak?**

**Defined:
How are you?**

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

**High: 64
Low: 53**



Tomorrow

**High: 68
Low: 46**



Wednesday

**High: 71
Low: 47**

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(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton 7th MPAD)

1st Lt. Jaime Breckenridge, and Spc. John Stanley, with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, talk with Iraqi soldiers after searching houses in a Baghdad neighborhood Feb. 17.

Military presence provides stability

**By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

CAMPLIBERTY, Iraq - Security patrols doubled over the past week and the effects of violence in Baghdad was reduced as Iraqi security forces and the Multi-National Division - Baghdad implement Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, (translated, it means "enforcing the law"), MND-B senior officials noted this week.

"Nearly 20,000 security patrols were conducted this week," said MND-B spokesperson Lt. Col. Scott R. Bleichwehl. "Since the operation started, there has been a reduction in the number of attacks across the Iraqi capital."

At a Pentagon press briefing conducted via satellite, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., also pointed to the relative calm across Baghdad Feb. 16.

"Heading over here (to the press briefing), we've only had 19 attacks against our forces," Fil told the assembled media members. "None of them were effective."

Bleichwehl said Iraqi police and national police patrols accounted for more than 11,000 of the total patrols mounted from Feb. 10-16.

During the week of Feb. 10-16, 51 operations, at company-level or higher, were conducted in and around the Iraqi capital. Twenty-four of the company-level operations were jointly conducted with Iraqi security and coalition forces working together. More than 600 joint patrols were executed throughout

the city.

The increase in operations netted 15 weapons caches during the week, with the largest coming south of Baghdad during Operation Algeria II.

During that operation, conducted Feb. 11, four separate caches were discovered and three dozen insurgent suspects were detained.

The 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, a supporting Military Transition Team, air support from 4th Squadron, 227th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion and paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division all combined to locate four IEDs and one vehicle-borne improvised explosive device during the joint operation. The 36 suspects were also detained for further questioning.

In all, the operation involved more than 400 Iraqi Army troops aimed at helping Iraqi forces establish security in the northern portion of Babil province.

Another major security operation in eastern Baghdad kicked off this week, as Iraqi security forces and MND-B troops continue clearing operations in Adhamiyah. Dubbed Operation Arrowhead Strike VI, the ongoing operation began Feb. 14. Thus far, Bleichwehl said the operation has netted three weapons caches and detained five suspects, further emphasizing the fact that there will be no safe havens for extremists organizations in the Iraqi capital.

Baghdad in Brief

Polar Bears detain AIF leader and 47 others during mission

YUSUFIYAH, Iraq - Coalition forces detained 49 suspected terrorists and found three improvised explosive devices during a combat operation Feb. 16-17 in Quarghuli Village, Iraq.

Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment "Polar Bears," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), the 2nd Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment attached from the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division conducted the clearing operation coined as Operation Polar Iron.

The two-day operation, which consisted of air and ground assaults, was conducted in order to disrupt anti-Iraqi forces within areas of Quarghuli Village, long known as a terrorist safe haven.

During the operation the soldiers received small arms fire, but no one was hurt.

One of the detained local nationals was reported to be an al Qaeda cell leader.

Another detainee was discovered to be black listed for involvement with the Sunni extremists.

The detainees were taken to Patrol Base Yusufiyah, Iraq for further questioning.

The IEDs were detonated during a controlled detonation conducted by the Explosive Ordnance Team.



'King of Battle' is ready for anything



(Photos by Spc. Alexis Harrison 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Steven Lucero, an Edgewood, N.M., native and section chief with Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, checks the hydraulic fittings on the 155mm howitzer he and his team man at Forward Operating Base Falcon Feb. 8.

Guns

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the overnight shift on the guns. As soon as the shift change is over, Lucero, a section chief, readies his team by performing all the necessary checks in his machine and monitoring the radio.

"The call for fire could come at any time, so we have to be ready to go," said the Edgewood, N.M., native.

Lucero and his team went through a few dry-fire exercises to make sure they were on point with their targeting system.

Although they didn't fire anything, the team worked furiously to get the imaginary rounds fired.

What may seem as simple as firing an oversized rifle actually involves quite a

bit of science. Not only do the gunners know how to aim the cannon, they know the properties of the propellant, the exact timing of the fuses and every step it takes to send a massive 155mm round out into the battlefield.

"Everybody on the crew is just as important as the next guy," Lucero said. "We all know how to run the gun."

While the night lingers, the temperature drops. The crew does everything it can to stay warm and awake during its 12-hour shift through the night.

Just as it seemed nothing was going to happen, a call came over the radio for a possible mission.

In seconds, the crew was on its feet and in position.

Sometimes the Soldiers

are tasked with firing illumination rounds out into the dark sky to help fellow Soldiers out on the streets see better and possibly spot any insurgent activity.

Sometimes the Soldiers get to fire more lethal, high-explosive (HE), rounds. According to everyone in the paladin, these rounds are capable of obliterating just about anything they come into contact with.

As they stand ready, another call comes across the radio telling them to stand down.

Disappointment flashes across the faces of the troops from platoon.

"We were hoping to get to fire tonight, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen," Lucero said. "We hope to get to fire at something every night we're out here. It makes the long nights worthwhile."

Hours later, the sun

breaks over the horizon signaling not only daylight, but the end to another long shift for the four Soldiers manning the gun.

After an uneventful night, the Soldiers open the hatch, climb out and begin preventative maintenance.

Lucero said they check the oil and hydraulics every morning.

He again stressed the importance of having his vehicle in the best shape possible, in case a fire order came down.

After the checks and services the team waits until its relief shows up.

After a long night of standing at the ready, the Soldiers get chow and go back to their rooms to get some rest before the next night's shift when they have another chance to prove themselves as the 'King of Battle.'



Sgt. Steven Lucero, a section chief with Batt. B, 3rd Bn., 82nd FA Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., checks out the cockpit of the mobile howitzer his team mans on Forward Operating Base Falcon Feb. 8.

Soldier fights off cancer to fight in Iraq

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - What makes a person desire to join the military during a time of war? Service members have different reasons for joining the military.



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton 7th MP AD)

Pfc. Matthew Moody, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scans his designated area for intruders.

Whether it's a love of country or wanting to secure their future, there is always a reason to serve. But is there a 'greater cause' for joining the service?

For Pfc. Matthew Moody, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team., 2nd Infantry Division, joining the Army was more than just providing security for his future. Joining the military was a way to honor his fallen friends.

While serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, Moody said he had friends killed in action there.

"One of the biggest reasons I joined the Army was not necessarily to avenge my friends' deaths, but to honor their deaths by continuing where they left off," said Moody, a native of Springfield, Ore. "It just felt like the right thing to do."

When asked by a recruiter what he wanted to do for the Army, Moody replied that all he really wanted to do was kick in doors with a shotgun in his hands. The recruiter said that a he couldn't guarantee a shotgun, but that he could guarantee an M-16, which led to him to the infantry.

Since joining the military, Moody said he has come to love serving his country. That love helped him fight his way into the fight in Iraq.

Following completion of his training,

he was assigned to his unit with an Iraqi deployment looming.

As the rest of his new unit prepared for their deployment Moody found out that he would not be going to Iraq, and that service to his country might come to an abrupt halt.

He had been diagnosed with cancer, he said, forcing him to remain behind as his new-found friends left for Iraq.

Moody said his only option was to fight his illness. Finally, he was declared fit to fight.


"I was happy because I really wanted to be with my buddies in Iraq," he said.

Once arriving in Baghdad, the climate surprised him, Moody said. He was expecting a desert, like he saw at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Moody's unit spends much of their time kicking in doors searching for bad guys, he said, conducting clearing operations and cordon and search missions.


He said he has come to enjoy his time in Iraq, taking in the scenery and doing what he has come to love.

With the fight for his life over, and gaining a love for his job, Moody said he now looks forward to continuing his services in Iraq and returning home.



First Team

POWER THOUGHT



"I CAN SAVE MY OWN LIFE"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I am responsible for my own safety both on and off post.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Because I AM important, my friends and family love me,
My unit needs me, and my nation is depending on me.



Due to technical difficulties we were unable to post today's TV schedule. Sorry for the inconvenience.